

# 10,000 Steps

Getting started on a 10,000  
step walking program



# How much exercise does it take?

- In December, 2001, the U. S. Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher issued “The Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Prevent and Decrease Overweight and Obesity.” In this report, Dr. Satcher joined former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop by highlighting the health risks and costs of overweight and obesity and issued a call to Americans to take action. Dr. Koop founded Shape Up America! in 1994 because of his concern about the increasing prevalence of obesity in America. The mission of Shape Up America! is to provide you with solid (scientific) information on weight management. Over the years, the Surgeon General has warned Americans about such things as the hazards of cigarette smoking or a high cholesterol level in your blood. In 1996, the Surgeon General issued an important report on physical activity and warned us that regardless of our age, we are just not active enough. Since then, you may have been scratching your head, wondering just how much activity would make the Surgeon General happy. Our purpose is to clarify how much exercise is necessary to manage your weight and to introduce the 10,000 steps program.

# Exercise and Health

- The Surgeon General's recommendation for physical activity is to add about 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity each day ON TOP of your customary daily activities. This recommendation is a health recommendation - it is designed to improve your health and it is backed by solid evidence that you WILL improve your health if you follow this recommendation. But is it enough activity to prevent weight regain after a weight loss program? Is it enough activity to prevent overweight in the first place? No, the studies show it is not likely to be enough for either purpose.



# How much is enough for weight management?

- So how much activity is enough for weight management? There are now some studies suggesting that walking 10,000 steps a day is the right ball park to be in. Several months ago, we decided to purchase a pedometer so that we could figure out how to talk to you about the physical activity goal of “10,000 steps a day.” The pedometer we purchased is of the very simple variety. It tracks steps and that’s it. We didn’t care about tracking miles walked or calories burned or any of the other fancy features that some pedometers offer. We purchased the basic model, which means it was the least expensive -- costing less than \$30. We learned you can’t just stick it in your pocket. You have to firmly clip it to a belt or waistband around your waist in order for it to work properly.
- After wearing the pedometer for a few weeks, we learned that in the normal course of events – just living and working – we took anywhere from 900 to 3000 steps in a day and not much more. In other words, we came to realize that nearly impossible for us to get in 10,000 steps intentionally going out for a walk (or getting c



hout  
).

## Steps per Day

Less than 5000

5000 – 7499

7500 – 9999

10,000 – 12499

12,500+

## Fitness Rating

Sedentary

Low active

Somewhat active

Active

Highly active



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## Aim for:

- 7,500 steps/day for preventing weight gain
- 10,000+ steps/day for weight loss and high fitness

# To get started...

- To avoid injury, you need to work up slowly. If you have any concerns about your joints (ankles, knees or hips) discuss your exercise plans with your physician.
- You will need a good pair of walking shoes. We noticed that we are wearing out our sneakers and replacing them every six months or so.
- Start out by wearing the pedometer each day for two weeks and don't do anything to change your normal routine. Before you go to bed, take care to log your steps at the end of the day each day for the entire two-week period. At the end of the second week, take a look at how many steps you are taking each day in the course of living your life. Perhaps on some days it is as few as 700 steps in a day and on other days, it may be as high as 2500 steps.
- If you feel comfortable doing so, take the highest number of steps you have walked on any given day and use that number of steps as your daily step goal. Feel free to select a smaller number of steps as your goal if you prefer. To avoid injury, do not select a higher number. Aim for your goal each day for the next two weeks. Let's assume your first step goal is 2500 steps. That means that for the next two weeks, you are going to try to walk 2500 steps each day. Before bedtime each night, be sure to log in the number of steps you actually took.



# To get started...

- At the end of that two-week period, review all the steps you took each day and decide if you are ready to add another 500 steps to your goal. Your new step goal is now 3000 steps a day for the next two-week period.
- Continue in that manner, working up as slowly as you wish, until you finally reach the goal of 10,000 steps a day.
- Check with your physician if you experience any pain or discomfort that concerns you. We consider pain a warning signal that something may be wrong. Our goal is to keep you active for the rest of your life. So don't go overboard and pull a muscle that will put you out of commission. Take it slow. Take it easy.



# I hate to walk, but I like to...

- If you really can't stand to walk but you like to jog or run -- Go ahead and get your steps in with jogging or running. A pedometer can track your steps whether you are moving slow or fast. If you use special exercise equipment or if you like to bicycle, swim or kayak, we discovered our pedometer does not help us keep track of our activity. Even on a stair stepper or stair climber in the gym, it was not accurate. But not to worry, you can "translate" your 10,000 step goal into an equivalent time goal for your favorite activity.





# After I have reached my goal, then what?

- It takes about six months to “lock in” a new behavior. Aim to do what is necessary to change your exercise behavior permanently. Be prepared to dedicate yourself to your daily goal each day for a minimum of six months. If you do that, you are much more likely to maintain this goal permanently.
- If you skip a few days due to illness, work or other obligations, the sooner you get back into the exercise groove, the more likely you will be able to get back into your routine.
- If you continue to skip days, you will discover it is a downward spiral. The more days you skip, the more likely you will abandon your program altogether.

Stages of Change!!

# After I have reached my goal, then what?

- If you can get back in the groove and exercise two days in a row, you will discover that the third day of exercise will be easier to achieve.
- If you are starting to get bored, we suggest you start keeping an exercise log so you can monitor yourself.
- If you are keeping a log but still struggling with boredom, you may be ready to think about designing a more comprehensive fitness program for yourself. We can help you design such a program if you visit our “Fitness Center”
- As another hedge against boredom, consider finding a buddy to exercise with or locate a few buddies you can call upon to join you from time to time. But don't let a flagging commitment on the part of your buddy influence your commitment to your goals. Be prepared to carry on alone.

# Common questions

- How do you convert time on a bike to steps?
  - If you have a stationary bike that has a calorie readout, then all you need to know is that walking one mile is equivalent (approximately) to burning 100 calories. If you exercise on your bike long enough to burn 100 calories, that is like walking 2000 steps. To burn the equivalent of walking 10,000 steps, you would have to exercise long enough to burn 500 calories.



# Common questions

- How many miles do I walk with 10,000 steps?
  - Walking 10,000 steps is the approximate equivalent of walking 5 miles. The distance covered depends on the length of your stride. That is



# Common questions

- I would like to include using a pedometer to my fitness program. My question is, I wear dresses to work nearly every day. What is the best way to attach the pedometer to the dresses? So far everything I have tried has resulted in inaccurate step counts.
  - I have had luck attaching my pedometer to a belt which I wear over a dress or anything else that does not have a firm waistband. The pedometer should be clipped to the belt firmly and the belt buckled securely so it won't move around. The pedometer should be worn in a location above the hip so that it can detect the leg movement.



# Resources

- <http://walking.about.com/>
- <http://walking.about.com/cs/measure/a/webwalkingusa.htm>
- <http://www.justmove.org/home.cfm>
- <http://www.pbs.org/americaswalking/>
- <http://bodytronics.com/shop/index.cgi?code=3&cat=6>

# Stay tuned for next week

- Travel fitness
  - Tips for staying fit while on TDY, leave or vacation!

